Design competitions are increasingly used to procure the design of, well, anything. Government and private clients, as well as even celebrities are offering ever-larger awards and visibility for buildings, landscapes, and products, as well as for solutions to complex economic, social, and ecological problems. Competitions can mobilize thousands of talented people across disciplines to creatively tackle pressing challenges in the production of built and landscape environments. Do they advance the skills of the professions as a whole? Do they identify new talent? These and other questions will be addressed through the use of case studies and public presentations.

The Design Competition Conference will review the state of design competitions and their role in the design and production processes. Using the lens of professional, ethical, business, legal, aesthetic, and public policy, design professionals will explore the potential and limitations of design competitions in the production of built and landscape environments of the day, while also asking questions about the public interest in the production of design. How can the public get to participate and benefit? Do they make for better financial outcomes and, if so, for whom? Are they an ethical method for securing design given the publicized — if not public — settings. They can also be wasteful, less-than-fully transparent, and even exploitative.

The Design Competition Conference will explore the role of design competitions in the practice of design and the production process. The conference is free and open to the public.

Conference Co-Chairs:
Jerold S. Kayden, David van der Leer
Moderators:
Susanna Sirefman | Founder, Dovetail Design Strategists
Grace La | Principal, LA DALLMAN / Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Design
Reed Kroloff | Principal, jones | kroloff
Stephen Cassell | Partner, Architecture Research Office
Marshall Brown | Associate Professor, Illinois Institute of Technology,
Silvia Benedito | Assistant Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Design

Panelists:
Jenn Gustetic | Assistant Director for Open Innovation, White House Office
Nidhi Chaudhary | Vice President of Challenge Success, HeroX
MIT Sloan School of Management

Panelists:
Bill Aulet | Managing Director, Martin Trust Center for MIT Entrepreneurship
Nel Kossen | Co-Founder, Kossen-Brinkman
Billy Shieh | President of Challenge Lab
David Smith | Executive Director, The Pearl Coalition
Scott Kratz | Director, 11th Street Bridge Park Project

Announcement of the Winners of the Harvard GSD Francis Loeb Library/Design Competitions Course Design Competition

Closing Remarks

Thursday, April 23 - Friday, April 24, 2015
Harvard Graduate School of Design, Gund Hall, Cambridge, Massachusetts
Speaker Bios

Taha Jennings
IIT School of Architecture

Jenn Gustetic
Assistant Director for Open Innovation, Van Alen Institute

Jerold S. Kayden
Architecture Critic, Van Alen Institute

Silvia Beneficiosi
Senior Advisor, U.S. Department of Transportation

Jerome Chou
Urban planner and lawyer, he teaches and writes about land-use law, real estate development, and citizen science. Previously, Gustetic was NASA’s Prizes and Challenges Program Executive. She holds an MS in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Scott Davis
Senior Advisor in Urban Studies and a Master’s of City and Regional Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Recently serving as a Senior Advisor for the Urban Coalition, currently working to build the “Spirit of Place” affordable housing project.

Scott Kratz
Director of Innovation & Entrepreneurship at Van Alen Institute

Stephen Cassel
Architecture, Research Director, Skyscraper Museum

Grace La
Assistant Director of Scape and Prizes at Van Alen Institute

Nidhi Chaudhary
Inga Saffron

Jerome Chow
Design and Technology Strategist at SCAPE

Ingo Saffron
Architecture Magazine, and Architecture

Cara Cragan
Studio Leader with Rockwell Group

Susanna Sirefman
Director of Design Experiments at the San Francisco Centre for the Advanced Visualization of the City

Scott Davis
Senior Advisor in Urban Studies and a Master’s of City and Regional Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University. Recently serving as a Senior Advisor for the Urban Coalition, currently working to build the “Spirit of Place” affordable housing project.

David Smith
Executive Director of The Pearl Oyster Bar

Craig Dykers
Director of Design Experiments at the San Francisco Centre for the Advanced Visualization of the City

David van der Leer
Program Director of the 2020-2021 MIT Media Lab’s Urban Initiatives Lab and the MIT New Urbanism Lab

Francine Houben
International Research Director of Van Alen Institute

Sara Wirth
Program Director of the 2020-2021 MIT Media Lab’s Urban Initiatives Lab and the MIT New Urbanism Lab

Taha Jennings
Assistant Manager, for the New Urbanism Lab at the MIT Media Lab, where he leads projects that explore the intersection of design, technology, and urban development.